

(19)



Europäisches Patentamt

European Patent Office

Office européen des brevets

(11) **EP 0 757 101 A2**

(12)

**EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**(43) Date of publication:  
05.02.1997 Bulletin 1997/06(51) Int Cl.<sup>6</sup>: **C12N 15/74**(21) Application number: **96305330.1**(22) Date of filing: **19.07.1996**(84) Designated Contracting States:  
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**London WC1R 5LX (GB)**(54) **Circular plasmids from Rhodococcus**(57) The specification relates to circular plasmids derived from microorganisms of the genus *Rhodococcus*, which have sizes of about 3.6 kb and restriction site

numbers of BamHI:1, BglII:1, ClaI:1, PstI:1, PvuII:2 and SacI:1. The circular plasmids of the present invention are useful as vectors in industrially useful host-vector systems.

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## Description

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to novel plasmids, more specifically to novel plasmids derived from microorganisms of the genus *Rhodococcus*.

It is known that microorganisms of the genus *Rhodococcus* are industrially very useful because they can produce a wide variety of useful substances such as enzymes participating in the metabolism of nitriles, enzymes participating in the decomposition of PCB (polychlorobiphenyl) and the like, and biosurfactants which can be used in the treatment of waste water.

However, the development of vectors which are suitable for use in host microorganisms of the genus *Rhodococcus* has not made much progress. Plasmids were found in only a few strains of *Rhodococcus* such as *Rhodococcus* sp. H13-A (J. Bacteriol. 170, 638-645 (1988)), and *Rhodococcus rhodochrous* ATCC 4276, ATCC 14349, ATCC 14348, ATCC 4001, etc. which were found by the inventors (see US 5,246,857 (Japanese Unexamined Patent Publication Nos. Hei 4-148685 and 4-330287)).

Particularly in the case where these host-vector systems are to be used industrially, they are believed to be desirably used in self-cloning systems in order to insure safety of recombinant DNA-containing microorganisms. However, the problem is that only *Rhodococcus rhodochrous* can be at present used for self-cloning systems. Hence, there has been a strong need to develop new vectors that can be used to create industrially useful microorganisms.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

As a result of the various studies conducted to develop industrially useful host-vector systems by using microorganisms of the genus *Rhodococcus*, the inventors found a novel circular plasmid from a microorganism of the genus *Rhodococcus* which can be used as a vector in industrially useful host-vector systems. The present invention was accomplished on the basis of this finding. Thus, in accordance with the present invention, circular plasmids are provided that are derived from microorganisms of the genus *Rhodococcus*, that have sizes of about 3.6 kb and that are characterized by the following restriction site numbers, BamHI:1, BglII:1, ClaI:1, PstI:1, PvuII:2 and SacI:1. The circular plasmids of the present invention are useful as vectors in industrially useful host-vector systems.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a restriction map of plasmid pRC020.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

In accordance with an embodiment of the present invention, the plasmid can be obtained from, for example, *Rhodococcus erythropolis* IFO 12320. This plasmid is a novel circular plasmid which has a size of about 3.6 kb and the characteristics of cleavage with restriction enzymes as shown in Table 1. This plasmid will be hereinafter referred to as "pRC020".

Table 1

Restriction Enzyme	The Number of Cleavage Sites	Sizes of Created Fragments (kb)
BamHI	1	3.6
BglII	1	3.6
ClaI	1	3.6
PstI	1	3.6
PvuII	2	2.75, 0.85
SacI	1	3.6

The following example is submitted to illustrate but not to limit the present invention.

## Example 1

## Isolation and Purification of Plasmid

Rhodococcus erythropolis IFO 12320 was inoculated into 100 ml of an MY medium (0.5% polypeptone, 0.3% bacto-yeast extract, 0.3% malt extract, 1% glucose). After 24 hours of cultivation, a 20% sterilized glycine solution was added to the culture at a final concentration of 2% and the cultivation was performed for additional 24 hours. The cells were then collected by centrifugation. The collected cells were washed with 40 ml of a TES buffer (10 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8), 10 mM NaCl, 1 mM EDTA) and suspended in 11 ml of a lysozyme solution (50 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8), 12.5% sucrose, 100 mM NaCl and 1 mg/ml lysozyme), followed by shaking of the mixture at 37 °C for 3 hours. To the culture, 1 ml of 10% SDS was added and the mixture was shaken gently for 1 hour. Further, 1 ml of a 3M sodium acetate buffer (pH 5.2) was added to the culture and the mixture was left to stand on ice for 1 hour. The culture was then centrifuged at 4 °C at 10,000 xg for 1 hour. To the supernatant, five volumes of ethanol were added and the mixture was left to stand at -20°C for 30 minutes, followed by centrifugation at 10,000 xg for 20 minutes. The precipitate was washed with 30 ml of 70% ethanol and then dissolved in 1 ml of a TE buffer to give a plasmid fraction.

The plasmid fraction was subjected to 0.7% agarose gel electrophoresis. The gel was stained with ethidium bromide to confirm the presence of the plasmid.

## Determination of Molecular Weight of Plasmid

Part of the plasmid thus prepared was subjected to 0.7% agarose gel electrophoresis. In the electrophoresis, E. coli plasmids pUC18 (size: 2.69 kb), pUC118 (size: 3.16 kb), pTrc99A (size: 4.17 kb) were electrophoresed as size markers at the same time. The plasmid obtained from Rhodococcus erythropolis IFO 12320 was designated as "pRC020". The size of pRC020 was about 3.6 kb as determined by agarose gel electrophoresis.

## Cleavage Specificity for Various Restriction Enzymes

Part of the plasmid thus prepared was reacted with various restriction enzymes. After the reaction, the reaction solution was analyzed by 0.7% agarose gel electrophoresis and 5% acrylamide gel electrophoresis. The HindIII and PstI digestion products of lambda phage DNA were used as size markers to calculate the sizes of various restriction fragments of the plasmid. The characteristics of pRC020 for cleavage with various restriction enzymes are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Restriction Enzyme	The Number of Cleavage Sites	Sizes of Created Fragments (kb)
BamHI	1	3.6
BglII	1	3.6
Clal	1	3.6
EcoRI	0	-
HindIII	0	-
PstI	1	3.6
PvuII	2	2.75, 0.85
SacI	1	3.6
SacII	0	-
SmaI	0	-
SphI	0	-
Sp1I	0	-
XhoI	0	-

## Claims

1. A circular plasmid derived from a microorganism of the genus Rhodococcus, which has a size of about 3.6 kb and restriction site numbers of BamHI:1, BglII:1, Clal:1, PstI:1, PvuII:2 and SacI:1.
2. The circular plasmid of claim 1, wherein the microorganism is Rhodococcus erythropolis IFO 12320.

FIG. 1

